THE LIFE OF JESUS

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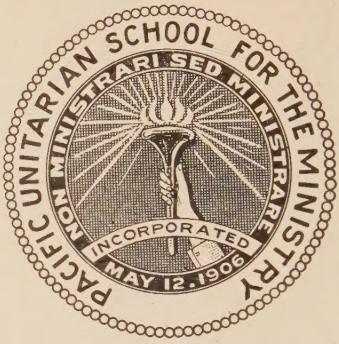

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CHARLES WILLIAM WENDTE

OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

THE

LIFE OF JESUS;

Re-Written for Young Disciples.

BY

JOHN PAGE HOPPS.

(FOURTH EDITION.)

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I have written this little book "For Young Disciples," because I have long felt the need of some such Work myself in my intercourse with elder scholars and the younger members of the Congregation. I believe others feel the want of a book, for the School, the Church, and the Home, which shall give to young people such an idea of Jesus Christ as may awaken their interest, their reverence, and their love, while, at the same time, it protects them against superstition and error.

I pray to the God of Jesus that this little book may help those, whom Jesus would have loved, to know something of one whose spirit is a safeguard against sin, and whose teachings are still the hope of the world.

J. PAGE HOPPS.

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THE LIFE OF JESUS.

I.

THE PARENTS, EDUCATION, AND HOME OF JESUS.

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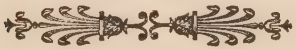
MORE than eighteen hundred years ago, there lived in one of the small towns of Palestine, called Nazareth, a little child who was very dear to his parents, but who, having been born in obscurity or even in poverty, was not much known beyond the humble circle of his own relations; by whom he was much loved for the singular gentleness of his manner, and much noticed for the rich promise of his earliest years. His parents called him JESUS, a name often given to children in those days. His father was a carpenter, and worked for his living; and his mother, who was a thoughtful, good, and loving woman, taught the little Jesus at

home till he was able to go and help his father at his trade. It was then, while Jesus was very young, that his kind mother observed in him a power to learn, or observe and understand, far beyond his years. He loved to hear her talk of his own people and his native land, and listened, with never failing interest and delight, as she told him of the patriarchs and prophets of other days, and how God led them and taught them in ancient times, and how the wise and the good looked for the coming of some great prophet now. Or he loved to hear her read from the ancient Psalms of Israel, or from some precious fragment of history, containing descriptions of the golden days that were past, and predictions of Israel's coming glory. But much as he delighted to hear of these marvellous things, he was so gentle and modest that he seemed ready to learn from, or find delight in, almost anything. He was a great lover of flowers and of the beautiful hills that stretched away out into the great world, beyond the limits of his little home. He also loved the company of children like himself, and rejoiced to make them his friends. He could never bear to see them unhappy or badly treated; and if they were cruel, or wicked, or unkind, he was as sorry for them as though they had been sick or in trouble. He felt happy, too, in the society

of good women and wise men, with whom he loved to converse, and whom he often surprised by his strange thoughts, and beautiful ideas, and earnest ways. But, above all, he delighted to think of the great and loving God, and of the holy angels, until at last heaven was as real to him as earth, and his Father's home above was as real as were the hills and valleys that lay about his father's home below.

One thing his companions and his mother always noticed in him, that he never did a really mean action, or spoke a false or wicked word. He had his faults like other children, but they were not faults that ever led him to be cruel, or deceitful, or unjust. He was not so strong nor so hardy as other boys, but he was brave, and did not let desire for pleasant things stand in the way of doing what he knew he ought to do; and if he ever spoke a sharp or hasty word it was when he saw or heard what was cruel, base, or mean.



II.

THE FIRST VISIT OF JESUS TO JERUSALEM.

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HIS parents, who were pious Jews, used to go up to Jerusalem every year to keep what was called the Passover; and when Jesus grew up to be twelve years of age, they took him with them. Now Jesus had heard a great deal about Jerusalem from his mother, and he looked forward to his journey with very great pleasure. For at Jerusalem there was the temple, and there were the priests, and the learned men, and the ancient books; and, indeed, to go and see Jerusalem was, to him, like going to see the world. So he went gladly with his parents, and, as soon as they arrived, he began to drink in, with his eager eyes and enquiring mind, all the wonders of what was to him that wonderful Jerusalem. Had not David

lived there, and Solomon, and the prophets, and all the great men of whom his mother had told him many a time in their little cottage-home? Had not the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob revealed Himself there to seers and prophets? Was it not the blessed and holy city, which would once more hear the words of greater seers and prophets yet to come? O, how happy were the men and women who were even then crowding the streets! whose privilege it was to have in their midst *every day* what it was, for him, a wonder and a blessing just to see only *once!* So he opened his young eyes and ears, and lost nothing of the sights and sounds that were all so new and so marvellous to him. And sometimes he strayed away from his parents, in his eager desire to see or hear more of something that attracted his attention. This happened so often that at last his parents got quite used to it; and so, when at last they started to return, they did not notice for awhile that Jesus was not with them, or, if they did, they supposed he was somewhere with the company. But when they had gone a day's journey and still saw nothing of him, they began to be very anxious; and, because they could not find him amongst their friends who were travelling with them, they turned back to seek him in the great city. It took them

three days to find him, but at last they saw him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the learned men there, conversing with them, and asking and answering questions. We can imagine how his mother's heart would be comforted when she saw him, and how she would wonder still more and more to find him in such a place, talking with such wise and learned men. And when she began to ask him about it he gave her an answer she never forgot, —so brave, so thoughtful, and so strange, and yet full of something that seemed to her motherly heart, so divinely touching, and gentle, and good. Why did you seek me? he said, Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business? In after days his mother understood his meaning well, but, for a long time, she could only keep such sayings in her heart.

From that day Jesus seemed to grow wiser, and nobler, and braver, and more earnest than ever, and it was plain to every one that he, at least, believed in God and loved Him; that he, at least, looked to God to fulfil the hopes of Israel, and that he was ready to serve God, his Father, with all his heart. More and more he thought of the glorious past, and of the great and holy men who had lived so near to God and the angels. More and more he thought of the present with its crying needs, and of the

future, with its coming redemptions; and more and more he prayed to God in secret that the brightest days of the past might be restored, that once more His children might love, and trust, and serve Him, and that the reign of sin, and misery, and death might for ever end. Whoever doubted God, he, at least, confided in Him; and, whoever despaired of the world, he, at least, kept the lamp of hope burning brightly in his soul. In the company of the priests and scribes, he had found more to sadden than to cheer him; and the sweet dreams of Nazareth began to fade amid the discords of Jerusalem. But his heart was far away with God in the peaceful Heavens;—far away with God, and yet near to His sorrowful children who so sorely needed Him, and yet knew not that He was near, and, day by day, he looked for the salvation that should come to Israel.

III.

THE GREAT CRISIS IN THE LIFE OF JESUS.

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AFTER a time, when Jesus was about the age of twenty-eight, a great change seemed to come over him. His bright and happy nature became clouded, and his love for the society of his friends seemed to disappear. He was much alone, and, on one occasion, led by his lonely thoughts and by the change that had come over his spirit, he left his friends, and dwelt in the wilderness for forty days. What had happened to him to produce this change? Was he discontented and fretful? Had he lost his genial and beautiful faith in God? No, but the time had come, when all that he had heard, and seen, and thought, and desired, had ripened in his soul, and when the great work of his life had to be begun.

He was grieved because of the sin, and sorrow and suffering, and ignorance, that were in the world. He looked around, and he saw men, and women, and children living, and working, and dying just as though there were no God, or as though God were anything but their Father and their Friend. What he had seen and heard at Jerusalem, when he was only a boy, and what he had seen and heard since, had only made him feel that the world had lost something it once possessed, or that it had not yet found something it sorely needed; and he longed to make known to all men the thoughts that shone in his own mind and the feelings that stirred in his own heart.

But he saw plainly that if he undertook to do this he must be prepared to suffer many things; that he must expect to be persecuted and contradicted, and perhaps hated or even punished by people who would be sure to dislike any one who told men of things that were wrong, and who called upon them to set the wrong things right. And his gentle, sensitive, happy nature shrank from all this; and he was, for a long time, tempted to give up his desire, his thought, and his plan. He thought of the poverty that would await him. How should he be able to live? If he spent his time in teaching men truths that would be strange and therefore dis-

agreeable, he would be neglected and would have to suffer hunger; and that, for a time, troubled him. And then he thought that, before he risked it, he would try whether God would feed him by a miracle. And then he had thoughts of quite another kind. The idea came into his mind that if he went on and carried out his purpose, he might become a great king and have wonderful power over men, and be rich and grand. And he had to struggle with all his might against these thoughts and temptations before he could take one step in the way that was so clearly marked out before him. And this it was that made him thoughtful, and grave, and sad, and silent, and that led him away into the wilderness, from the noise of the town, and the sound of men's voices, and even from the faces of his friends.

At last the blessed light came, the struggle in his mind was all over, the cloud disappeared from his face, and the sorrow from his heart; for he had made up his mind to give himself to God, and to go forth as His dear Son, to tell his brethren the good news God had revealed to him. He would go and tell them that nothing stood between God and man but sin, and ignorance, and unbelief; that every little child was God's child; that the Mighty God was the God of love; that not only Jews but

Gentiles were His children; and that *all* men might lift up their eyes to heaven and say, "*Our Father.*" He would go, with the wonderful power that God had given him, and he would show the people that God wanted them to be healthy, and happy, and hopeful, and good. He would try to lift up this black veil that seemed to hide heaven from earth, and God from man, and do all he could to make earth like heaven. Surely the people would hear him, and gladly leave their fears, their fetters, and their sins!

Then, when all this became plain to him, and when it was all settled in his mind and heart, it seemed as though the angels were whispering to him and strengthening him. The wilderness around seemed full of bright beings whom his Heavenly Father had sent to love and comfort him; and he went home with such blessed gifts from Heaven as, from that day, made all men wonder at his works and words.

IV.

Jesus begins to teach and heal the people.

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IN a little while the precious truths which Jesus told the people about God and themselves, and the life beyond the grave, drew round him many faithful and loving friends and hearers. Out of these he, in time, chose twelve to be his disciples and followers. These were mostly simple-minded, honest, and earnest men; not prejudiced or bigoted; but none of them really understood Jesus perfectly, and one of them even proved a traitor in the end. And then, as he had expected, he drew upon himself the hatred and suspicion of the men who did not like him to win the people to his new teaching. For however good and beautiful truth may be, it is sure to be hated, and the teacher of it is sure to be

persecuted and rejected when it is first taught. And so Jesus found it, especially when he went to Jerusalem, where he found that the people in authority were exceedingly angry with him. But the people flocked to hear his words and see his wonderful works; and so those who desired to silence him were afraid to touch him.

Wherever he went, he seemed to have the power to make men listen to him and love him. And he had another power, which was stranger than all. He was so good, so pure, so wise, and so full of trust in God his Father, that he had power to do many things that men who did not live so near to God thought impossible. Poor mad people, when they were brought to him, recovered their senses when he looked into their wild eyes and when he touched them with his hand: and even the deaf and the blind and the sick were often healed by him; though sometimes, when the people round him were very ignorant, or wicked, or bigoted, he was not able to do anything for them. It seemed as though the power of God was able to flow through him in quite an unusual way, because he lived so near to God and loved Him so dearly and trusted Him so well. And, indeed, when the people asked Jesus how he was able to tell such wonderful truths or do such marvellous works, he always answered,

that he only spoke what God his Father told him, and that it was his Father who did the works. And so it came to pass, that, when sickness and deformity were brought to him, the power of God, through him, drove the sickness and the pain away.

Miserable madmen, who dwelt among the tombs, and whom no one could bind, heard his voice, and came and sat down at his feet, clothed and gentle, and in their right minds. Poor blind men, sitting by the wayside, when they heard that he was passing by, cried to him, in their great faith and hope, to stay and heal them: and when he touched their eyes, God gave them again the power to see. Loving mothers brought their little children to him, to be made whole: and when this true Son of God laid his hands upon them, the light came again into the poor dull eyes and the bloom of health into the pallid face. And many other wonderful and blessed works he did; and the people said, It was never so done before in Israel. And no wonder: for their unbelief, their sin, and their forgetfulness of God, had, as it were, shut up Heaven against them, so that they could not receive anything from the angels of God who were, nevertheless, so near.

V.

JESUS THE COMFORTER OF THE SAD, THE SAVIOUR OF THE SINFUL, THE FRIEND OF THE POOR, AND THE LOVER OF LITTLE CHILDREN.

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JESUS was also a great friend to the sinful and the miserable; and he was all the more a friend to them because he saw how they were treated by the world. He could not, of course, approve of their sin, but he felt for them and longed to do them good and save them from their sins; and if any poor creature came to him, tired of sin, and wishing to find a better path, he was never so happy as when he could lead the poor sorrowful heart to God, the loving Father, with the assurance that it would find hope and mercy there.

He told the people many beautiful stories about this, as showing how God desires us all to come

to him, even though we may have been disobedient and wicked. He told them about the Good Shepherd who leaves the sheep that are safe at home, and goes and seeks the one poor lost sheep that had strayed away. He told them of a poor man who hardly dared even to lift up his eyes to heaven, but whom God accepted and blessed, because he felt his sin and cried to God to help him and to make him good and true. He told them about a foolish youth who left his father's house and went into a far country and spent everything he had in waste and folly, and then suffered all the misery of famine; and how, when he came to a better mind and went back, his father welcomed him with happy tears. And all these things he told the people, on purpose to show them how God our Father thinks of us, and how He will welcome us when we return to Him. And once, when an unhappy wicked woman crept to him and covered his feet with tears, because she was so sorry for what she had done, instead of driving her away, he spoke to her so graciously and forgivingly, that she went away as full of hope and comfort as she had been full of sorrow and despair.

And, as we might suppose from all this, Jesus gave a great deal of his love and care to the poor and the neglected, as well as to the sinful and the

miserable. He always seemed to look more to the heart than to outward appearances, and thought less of riches than of character: and his delight was, to lift up the fallen, and to make much of the lowly and the weak. He told the rich men who had flung their gold into the treasury of the temple, that a poor widow who had just crept up and put a farthing in, had put in more than they all; because she had put in that which was valuable to her, while they could well afford a hundred times more than they had given. He chose, for his friends and followers, those who were humble and obscure, and even gave a special blessing to the hungry, the neglected, and the poor; and one day he told of a poor sick man, named Lazarus, who was so wretched on earth as to even lie at a rich man's gate, longing to get the crumbs that fell from his table, but who was received into Abraham's bosom in Heaven, while the rich man, who had forgotten God, lifted up his miserable face in Hell.

When he was blamed for attending so much to the neglected and the poor, he wisely and beautifully answered—"They that are well need not a physician, but they that are sick: I am come to seek and to save that which is lost." And one day he described his work in words borrowed from a book he perhaps had often pondered with his mother in

their little cottage-home at Nazareth—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." No wonder that, when he read these words and explained them in his own wise and gentle way, the people wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.

And, beside all this, he never lost his love for little children, and for the flowers of the fields that had been such a delight to him when he was a boy in the little town of Nazareth. He often talked to the people about the lilies, the seed-corn, the birds of the air, and the grass of the field; and when mothers, who trusted and believed in him, brought their little children to him, he took them in his kind brotherly arms, put his hands upon them, blest them, and said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." And once, when he was speaking to the disciples about humility and purity, he said the sweetest thing that was ever said about children, when he told them that it was the will of God that not one of these little ones should perish, but that their angels do always behold the Father's face in Heaven.

VI.

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT.

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WHEN delivering his message to the people, he told them he had come from God, and that he was His Son. He also told them that all who lived upon earth were His children, and that they might be His *loving* and *happy* children, if they would only do His will. He told them that God their Father only wished them to understand how He loved them, and desired them to find true happiness in doing His will on earth, even as the angels found their happiness in doing His will in Heaven. He spoke much of light, and called men to come to it that they might be saved from error, misery, and sin. He told the people that God could be served and worshiped anywhere, not only in the temple at Jerusalem as

the priests said, or on the sacred mount in Samaria, but wherever men lift up their hearts to God and desire to feel Him near.

Such teachings as these were very much disliked by many in Jerusalem, who were not used to such great and generous thoughts, but many others welcomed and rejoiced in them; amongst whom were many of the "common people," whose simple natures echoed to his words; for he did not speak from books but from his own human heart; and he taught the people, not ancient traditions, but fresh and loving truths that went home to all pure and honest souls. So the people heard him gladly, and whenever he spoke to them they flocked to hear him, till the priests and scribes in Jerusalem became alarmed lest the people would desert them altogether and receive the religion of this Nazarene.

One thing he constantly taught the people was, that the Kingdom of Heaven, as he called it, ought to be established upon earth; and, in the wise and beautiful prayer he taught his disciples to pray, one of the very first petitions is, that God's Kingdom may come, and that His will may be done upon earth, as it is done in Heaven. What did he mean by this? Even those who believed in him, and loved and trusted him, often had to ask this question, and it was no wonder that some, even of his

friends, thought that he spoke of a kingdom like the kingdoms of earth, whose existence depended upon the power of armed men or the pomp of kings.

But Jesus was very patient with the people, whether they were his enemies or his friends, and he took pains to teach them that this kingdom he spoke of was within them, and that its existence depended upon the love of men's hearts and their desire to do the will of God. It was a kingdom which had no outward limits and no visible king. It was a kingdom which all might enter; even the poor slave and the little child, since the Great King of Heaven took no notice of these distinctions of earth. So Jesus called poor fishermen, sorrowful sinners, obscure working-men, neglected children, and all who were in want of a good King and kind Father. And all these he told that nothing was wanting to bring them into God's kingdom but their own wish, their own affection, their own behaviour. Do the will of God, he said, trust Him, love Him, and serve Him, and then you may live, cheerful and happy, in the knowledge that you are in God's kingdom now, and that you will be welcomed into His kingdom hereafter.

VII.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

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ONE day when the people, who had followed him into the country, thronged about him to hear his words, he went up one of the beautiful hills of Galilee and preached to them what has always been called "The Sermon on the Mount;" a sermon which, for nearly 1800 years, has delighted and instructed mankind, and which will delight and instruct mankind for thousands of years to come. In this sermon Jesus said many things that were quite contrary to the ways and sayings of the world; for the world blesses the rich, the prosperous, the happy, the strong, and those who share its spirit and fall in with its ways. But Jesus blest the gentle, the humble, and the meek, who have none of the pride, and pomp, and vain glory of the world.

He blest, also, the mourners, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace-makers, the persecuted for righteousness' sake, and those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness. In this sermon, also, he taught the people that those who came into God's kingdom must be like cities set upon a hill, or like shining lights, to be a landmark or a guide to all; for in this way, he said, they might bless the world, and bring men upon earth to seek the Great Father in Heaven.

He also taught them to be brave and faithful, and to let nothing stand in the way of duty and right. He even said that they ought to be willing to lose a hand or an eye rather than do wrong. He told them, moreover, to be forgiving, and to hate and watch against the very beginning of revenge; to love their enemies, and to bless those who cursed them; for in so doing, he said, you will be true children of your Father in Heaven, who is good to all, and who lets His rain fall and His sun shine upon the evil and the unthankful as well as upon the grateful and the good. He also taught them to hold communion with God in secret, and to be content with the reality and not the mere show of prayer. It was the custom then to give a great deal of attention to appearances, and forms, and ceremonies; and, for a show, men would even pray

at the corners of the streets, and do their good works so as to be seen of all. But Jesus told the people that it mattered very little what men saw, but that it mattered much what God alone beheld. He taught them, therefore, to pray to God in secret, and to have their hearts right in His sight.

He called upon them to lay up for themselves treasure in heaven, to send their affections on before, to the place where nothing corrupts, and whence nothing can be taken away. And in this spirit he advised them not to be over anxious about this world, but to leave many things to God, while they made it their first concern to seek God's righteousness and to find their way into His kingdom. He said that God was ever ready to hear their prayers, and that just as a good father on earth would do his best to understand his children's wants and to supply them, so God our heavenly Father, will regard us and help and bless us. And, in ending his wonderful sermon, he taught the people a solemn truth which can never be too much pondered by us all, —that they who enter God's bright kingdom hereafter will be, not those who make much profession, and cry *Lord, Lord*, but those who *do* the will of God upon earth. And this he illustrated by that terrible story of the two men who built, the one a house upon a rock, and the other a house upon

the sand. The first stood in spite of all that wind, and rain, and flood could do to destroy it, but the last was miserably destroyed. The first was he who heard the words of Jesus, and kept and practised them; the second was he who heard them but neglected them. And when Jesus had ended his teaching the people were all astonished at it, for he taught them as though he believed and knew that all he said was true; and they had never before heard such a teacher in Israel.

VIII.

JESUS ONE WITH GOD.

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JESUS lived in constant communion with God. This was the secret of his life—a life that knew nothing of estrangement from God. From his earliest days God had been a reality to him. He had heard the whisper of God in his own soul; he had seen the glory of God in the heavens; he had felt the presence of God upon the earth; he had silenced the discords of passion in his own breast, with the voice of selfishness and the cries of self-will; he had appealed to God as his Guide, his Father, and his Friend; and he at last came to feel that he himself was nothing, but that God was everything. Therefore he told the people that he came from God; that his words were not his own; that his Father did the works; and that

he and his dear Father were truly one. He believed this, he felt it, he knew it, for his whole being was thrilled with joy when he felt that God's will had become clearer to him; and his loving heart found its deepest delight in cherishing the thought of God as one who never left him. Hence he could say, not as one who makes a large claim for his own glory, but as one who thankfully gives expression to his delight—"I am not alone, for the Father is ever with me."

When the Jews heard his words, as he told the people that God was in him, that he came from God, that God had sent him, and that his words were the words of God, some of them were foolish enough to fancy that he was claiming to *be* God! They did not understand the child-like simplicity of his nature. They could not see into the depths of that gentle and uncorrupted soul. They did not perceive that Jesus was only saying what every loving child says, when, by long tarrying in the blessed school of reverence and love, he feels that he knows all the will and has entered into all the love of the good father or mother who has ever been so dear. For Jesus claimed for himself no more than he claimed for us. We, also, are all children of God, and we, also, may live in gentle and hallowed communion with our Father. And if we could

unlearn our evil ways, and put away the darkness of our self-will, and the discord of our passion, and the ignorance of our pride, and listen to the gracious Father's voice, as Jesus did, we also might be able to say with him,—The words we speak are not our own but His, for our Father is ever with us. And if we could become conscious of the *complete* triumph of God's love in our souls, and the perfect consecration of our hearts and lives to Him, we also, each one for himself, might say with Jesus—I and my Father are one.

IX.

JESUS CONDEMNING THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.

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MANY of the Jews in the time of Jesus were narrow-minded and bigoted, and really believed that God thought more of them than of other nations; or they even went so far as to think and say that God cared only for them, and that other nations would not hereafter find mercy at His hands. But Jesus told the people that all this was a mistake. The children of God, he said, are all they that do His will; and these are born, not in any particular nation or of any particular parents, but may be found wherever men are doing their best to understand God and to serve Him. And, so far from agreeing with the priests and those who taught that only the prophets and the descendants of Abraham would be allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven hereafter,

he told them plainly that many others would come, from all parts of the world, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and would sit down with prophets and patriarchs in the kingdom of Heaven. In saying this, he told them a truth far greater than the men of his time had ever imagined, far greater than many of them were ready to receive, far greater even than some even now can master in all its breadth of charity and generosity; but a truth, nevertheless, which is leading on the best and noblest of mankind.

But the sayings of Jesus were not always gentle and tender, because during his life he had to speak of men who not only disliked his teachings, but who were proud, self-righteous, untruthful, and deceitful: and though no one could be gentler than he was to the sinful when they were unhappy, or to the wicked when they were sorrowful, he could not help feeling indignant at those who, while they pretended to be good, yet hated his words, and did their best to keep the people from hearing them. And just as sunlight and lightning may come from the same sky, so, from the heaven of his goodness and love, there came at times the lightning that was so terrible when directed against those whom he truly described as "Scribes and Pharisees, *hypocrites*." Nor should we wonder at this, or think it

wrong in him: for good men, because they are good, must hate all dishonesty and hypocrisy; and teachers of the people, who really desire to bless the sorrowful, the ignorant, the sinful, and the needy, *must* denounce those who will neither enter into God's kingdom themselves nor suffer others to enter in. So Jesus told these wicked men their true characters, and warned the people against them.

He taught his disciples to be brave and faithful, and not to be afraid of their enemies, who would try to silence them. When they persecute you in one city, he said, go into another, and preach there the kingdom of God: and if they kill you for it, what will it matter?—great will be your reward in Heaven. If you acknowledge me before men, he said, I also will acknowledge you before my Father and before His holy angels.

X.

JESUS PREPARES TO DIE.

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IT became plain at last to Jesus that the people in authority and the men whom he rebuked for their wicked opposition and hypocrisy, would try to stop him in his work, or even put an end to his life. He had only been teaching the people publicly for about two years, and he was but a young man, to whom life must have been very sweet, and before whose eyes Hope must have painted many welcome images of future success. But he was too wise to mistake what was coming; and he was too good to shrink from it, and too brave to fear it: and so at times he startled his companions and disciples with hints of coming trouble, and even told them plainly that the time was at hand when he would be taken from them. At such times it was his custom to call upon his sorrowing disciples to be prepared

to follow in his footsteps, and to take up their cross bravely and follow him. What if you lose your lives for my sake? he once said; you shall find them again: or what would it profit you to save your lives and gain the world, if, at the same time, you lost your souls or became castaways? And in this way he prepared them for his early death, and taught them to be faithful and brave.

One day, soon after he had been telling them of these things, he took a few of his disciples into a lonely mountain, to pray; and, while they were there, two angels appeared to them, and a bright cloud gathered round them, and the face of Jesus shone with dazzling light, and the angels spoke to him. But the disciples who were with him fell on their faces, for they were sore afraid. And, from that hour, Jesus, though he must have longed to live and carry on his work of love and mercy, prepared to die. He was only sorry for the people, who so sorely needed a friend and teacher, and for those who hated him and sought his life. And one day, thinking about Jerusalem, that might have been so glorious and so happy, if its inhabitants had not always been so rebellious against God and so cruel to His servants, he even wept over the wicked city, and said—How would I have blest you if you would have suffered me!—how would I have gathered your

children together, in the love of God and of each other! But now, your long day of grace is gone; your glory is becoming a desolation; and your beauty is as a fading dream!

Then he told the people of a great king who made a feast and asked many to come to it, who, when the time for the feast arrived, made excuses and did not come. He also told them of men whom a rich man put into his vineyard, to take care of it, but who were unfaithful, and who, when he sent his servants to receive the fruit, rose up and cast them out of the vineyard and refused to give the fruit to the rightful owner, and who at last killed their master's son. In these stories, Jesus was really describing the wicked and disobedient Jews, to whom God had given so many privileges, but who had slain the prophets and were even now plotting to put to death God's well-beloved Son. But he told them that the kingdom of God, of which they were unworthy, would soon be offered to all the world, and that the poor, the sinful, and the ignorant in all nations should have the blessed message sent to them; and that they would come to the feast of God.

XI.

THE LORD'S SUPPER, AND THE LAST PRAYER.

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AT last, the wicked men who all along had hated him, now made up their minds to destroy him: for the people were fast going over to his side, and even went so far as to wish to make him their king. But Jesus did not wish that, and only allowed them to cry—Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! The Pharisees wanted him to silence the people when they followed him with this cry; but Jesus replied, that if they were silent the very stones would speak. He said this to show how impossible it would be to keep the love of men's hearts from being expressed. And then he told the people to prize the light while they had it; for he knew that the cruel hands of his enemies would never be satisfied until they had put out the light of his life.

Then they plotted together how they might

destroy Jesus; and they bribed one of his disciples to take a part against him. Jesus knew this, and he also knew that it would not be long before the end came. So he gathered together his disciples in a room by themselves, and there he ate with them the meal that his disciples have ever since commemorated as "The Lord's Supper." The disciples felt that something terrible was about to happen, for Jesus was silent and sorrowful, and it was a sad meal that night for them all. At last Jesus looked upon them and said, in tones—O how sorrowful!—"One of you is about to betray me." And his poor broken-hearted disciples began to ask him one by one, "Lord, is it I?" But the unfaithful one knew who it was, and yet he also asked, "Lord, is it I?" And Jesus told him what he so well knew; and then Judas left the little band and went out into the black night, to do his wicked work for the Priests, the Pharisees, and the Scribes. And when he was gone, Jesus, both in the room and on the mount of Olives, spoke to his true disciples in a way they never forgot. He told them to love one another, and to be faithful to their work: he assured them that God their Father had provided for them many mansions in His house, and that he himself would go and prepare a place for them there, and then at last receive them to himself.

He told them that his Father was their Father, and that the love which God had for him He had for them. He also promised them a Comforter whom God would send to them—a spirit of truth, to make them confident and happy in the knowledge of what was right and true; and told them that if they wished to show their love for him they could not do so better than by keeping his commandments, and carrying on his work after he was gone. Let not your heart be troubled, he said, I leave my blessing with you. I leave you my peace. Sorrow not, but rejoice that I am going to our Father, who loves us all.

And then he prayed for them in words of such generous self-forgetfulness and with such brotherly love and tenderness as to make that prayer one of the noblest ever breathed, even as his sermon on the mount is the noblest sermon that ever was preached. In that prayer he asked God to keep these poor sorrowful men from all harm when he left them, and prayed that they might learn to love one another and be united, and bring many to know the Father even as they had learnt to know him.

Then he arose, and went with three of his disciples into a garden called Gethsemane, where he was in such anguish of spirit that he could not help crying out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful,

even unto death:" for the dark hour was drawing nigh,—the hour of shame, of sorrow, of pain, yea! the hour of death: and it was all too soon for such a life to come to an end. And he went forward, alone; and prayed to God in his agony, and, for a moment, was almost tempted to go back, to be unfaithful, and avoid the suffering that was at hand, and refuse to die. But it was only for a moment: for a blessed angel from heaven once more came to him to comfort and to strengthen him. When, therefore, the wicked men, with Judas at their head, came to take him, he was calm and resolved and would not allow his disciples to defend him. Then they took him away, and all his disciples but two forsook him and fled. These two followed him afar off, and succeeded in getting into the place of judgment whither they took Jesus: and one of them, Peter, being recognised, denied again and again that he was a follower of Jesus, although, only a little while before, he had said to him that he would die with him. And, when he had denied Jesus so vehemently, Jesus turned and looked upon him. That look pierced him to the heart with sorrow and with shame, and he went out and wept bitterly; and he never denied his dear friend and teacher again.

XII.

JESUS IS CRUCIFIED.

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HIS enemies then pretended to try him; but in reality they meant to destroy him whatever he might say. But Jesus calmly asked them what evil he had done; and did not care to defend himself. So they began to mock him and to ill-treat him, and, in the morning, the priests and the scribes and the rest of those who wanted him to be put to death took him to Pilate, the Roman governor, who alone could give them the authority to do as they desired. So these wicked men pretended that Jesus was a disturber of the public peace and that he had said he was a king; and Pilate, after a long delay and with a great deal of unwillingness, gave Jesus up to them. So the soldiers were allowed to take him away to be crucified. And they platted a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and put on

him purple and scarlet robes to mock him, as a king; and they pretended to worship him; and with many shameful words and deeds they sought to cover him with misery and scorn. And then they led him away to die. But many people who had loved him well followed him, weeping and lamenting, though they could not save him, for the soldiers went with him till the wicked deed was done.

Then, on a cross, they crucified Jesus, with two thieves, also on crosses, the one on his right hand and the other on his left. And one of the thieves reviled him, but the other was touched with sorrow and repentance, and asked his blessing; and Jesus told him that in a little while he would be with him in Paradise.

Standing by the cross, amongst the people, were his mother and the disciple whom he loved the best;—the mother who had taught him in the dear old home at Nazareth and who had watched his life with wonder and gratitude and joy; and the disciple who had been with him in his journeyings, and had heard his words and seen his wonderful works. And Jesus spoke to them, and gave his mother into the care of his disciple, and told him to be to her as a son.

Then, once more, the dark cloud of anguish seemed to come over him, and the bitterness of

death was bitter indeed to him; for it was so hard to die,—so young, so hopeful, so beloved; and, for a moment, he felt that even God had forsaken him. But the cloud soon vanished; and this gentle loving friend of the people died, crying—"Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit! Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

XIII.

JESUS OUR LIVING BROTHER.

—;o;—

THEN they buried him in the grave of one who loved him, and they set a watch over the grave and made it secure. But Jesus was not dead: *for no one ever dies.* His spirit had left the body, and that spirit was with the blessed angels; and God, who desired to show that He had power over death, and that His children need not fear to die, sent His angels to assist Jesus in showing himself again to his disciples. It is not at all likely that the body of Jesus arose from the grave as it had been put into it; for Jesus only showed himself privately on very few occasions, and then in a mysterious manner and with circumstances that proved that some very great change had passed over him. But what we do know is, that Jesus was able, in some way, to show himself again to his disciples,

so that a marvellous effect was produced upon them, altering all their thoughts, their prospects, and their plans. Upon the death of Jesus they were filled with sorrow and despair, and shrank into retirement for fear of the Jews; but not many days after this they were found proclaiming openly that Jesus was not dead, that there was no such thing as death, that the God of life had borne witness to this by permitting them once more to see Jesus, and that the crucified malefactor was now the risen and glorified Saviour, Conqueror of Death, and King and Leader of ransomed souls.

To account for this amazing change in them, we accept their own explanation when they said that they had seen Jesus, and that God had really raised him from the dead. So they went forth in the might of this great faith; and, ever since their day, by the followers of Jesus and of the apostles, the good news has been declared to men,—the good news which tells us that God is love, that now are we all sons of God, that there is light beyond the grave, and that, to believe in Jesus, is to know that we shall never die.

And now, to-day, the blessed work is going on. The fear of the human heart is being changed for trust, and the God of Jesus is being more plainly revealed to us as indeed "Our Father." When He

is fully and truly known by us, we shall love Him as Jesus did, and it will be our delight to serve Him on earth and go to meet Him in Heaven. Little children will think of Him as they think of the kindest heart that ever beat with love for them, and care-worn women and heavy-laden men will bring their sorrows to His feet; and, in that bright and happy day of trust in God, all men will feel like pilgrims who are journeying onward, not through an enemy's country, but through the country of a faithful friend—onward, not to darkness but to light, to life and not to death, to sweet voices of welcome and not to whispers of despair. For now, across the waves of our stormy life, the voice of the blessed Jesus comes to us—"Come unto me, O my weary brothers! come unto me, and I will give you rest."

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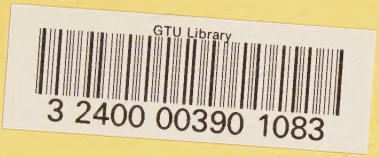

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